



State of South Carolina

Office of the Governor

MARK SANFORD
GOVERNOR

POST OFFICE BOX 12267
COLUMBIA 29211

May 31, 2006

The Honorable Robert Harrell Jr.
Speaker of the House of Representatives
Post Office Box 11867
Columbia, South Carolina 29211

Dear Mr. Speaker and Members of the House:

I am hereby vetoing and returning without my approval H. 4481, R-340. This bill entrusts DOT with the discretion to mow untold acres of natural areas in our interstate right of way at taxpayers' expense. I believe that granting this sweeping discretion to DOT would be ill-advised for the following reasons.

One, it places an agency already on strained financial ground with another tool to spend. In past years, DOT mowed excessively and planted non-native species when minimal management of the natural landscape would suffice. While this may have been a good deal for nurseries and mowers, it certainly wasn't a good deal for the taxpayer. In response, the General Assembly adopted a statutory 30-foot standard – supported by highway maintenance guidelines – that would reduce mowing costs to taxpayers and improve the natural appearance for all those who utilize our highways.

Two, in performing these unnecessary landscaping jobs, DOT contributes to America's addiction to oil. The energy costs to the taxpayer notwithstanding, the societal costs for increased consumption and corresponding emissions – while only a tiny part of a larger problem – run counter to the direction this administration has taken relative to decreasing our dependence on foreign sources of oil and to the environmental consequences of unchecked air pollution.

Three, I happen to believe that we live in a unique and beautiful place in South Carolina – one that doesn't need decorative, foreign plant species to crowd out those native species with which we are blessed. I personally believe that it would be a positive step to allow our roadsides to return to a more natural state where safety and other concerns permit such a transition; and using history as a guide, this legislation would move us in the opposite direction.

Also, the current vegetation management policy for billboards informs our position on the general mowing requirements modified by H. 4481. In the decision making process, DOT fails

The Honorable Robert Harrell, Jr.

Page 2

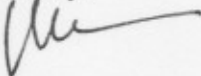
May 31, 2006

to calculate ways of enhancing the visual appeal for our state as each driver is subjected to the loss of tree lined public highways when the state maintains clear-cuts for billboards. In other words, DOT has not displayed the type of discretion with this vegetation management policy that we believe warrants increased discretion in a related policy.

Finally, I would have been far more amenable to legislation that delegated the power to exceed mowing standards (as well as the corresponding fiscal consequences of increased mowing) to relevant local governments. Consistent with that Home Rule ideal, it is worth noting that we have as a practical matter allowed project specific exceptions to the 30 foot standard as part of federal grants awarded to local governments. However, this legislation only offers the hollow requirement that DOT "consider" comments from local governments when making a vegetation management change in a given jurisdiction.

For the reasons stated above, I am vetoing H. 4481, R-340 and returning it without my approval.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'MS', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Mark Sanford